



Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence  
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**To:** Members of the Insurance and Real Estate Committee

**From:** Erika Tindill, Esq., Executive Director

Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence

**Date:** February 8, 2011

**RE:** S.B. 28: ACC Surety Bail Bond Agents and Professional Bondsmen

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Good afternoon, Senator Crisco, Representative Megna and members of the Insurance and Real Estate Committee. My name is Erika Tindill and I am the Executive Director of the Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence (CCADV). I am here today to express support for Senate Bill 28, An Act Concerning Surety Bail Bond Agents and Professional Bondsmen.

You may be wondering why the state domestic violence coalition is concerned with the regulation of surety bail bond agents and professional bondsmen. For my organization, support of policy and legislation that is responsive to the needs of victims, as well the safety concerns of their families *and* their communities is part of our mission. CCADV has 18 member programs across the state that directly provide a comprehensive range of services. In the last fiscal year, those programs collectively served more than 60,000 men, women, and children - nearly half of which came through the criminal courts or were dealing with an abusive partner with pending criminal charges. For those member programs, passing SB 28 translates into increased safety for many of the victims they serve. Family Violence Victim Advocates (FVVAs) working in the Geographical Area (G.A.) courts employed by our member programs may be the first court personnel to be assisting victims whose abusers have benefitted from the practice of

“undercutting” or payment plans for bail bonds. You will hear later this afternoon from Kathy Berkel, an FVVA, about her experience serving victims in these circumstances. FVVAs know firsthand of the danger to victims and the public safety issues that arise from defendants who pay little or nothing to get out on bond almost immediately. You may recall the tragic murder of Shengyl Rasim in West Haven on January 17, 2010. It was reported that her husband shot her in the face as she held their infant in her arms with their toddler sleeping in another room; this within hours after he was released *without having paid a dime* to a bondsman. Safety planning is much more complicated and labor intensive when the person from whom you are trying to stay safe gets out of jail quickly and unexpectedly.

I am not at all suggesting that regulation of bail bonds would have prevented this murder-suicide (based on what is known about the case, such regulation might only have prevented it on that particular day). Nor do I believe SB 28 or any other legislation alone will solve the problem of intimate-partner violence. I am suggesting, however, that this legislation can play a part in addressing domestic violence victim and public safety concerns. The bill must have a balanced approach with respect to defendants’ rights, public safety, business concerns, unintended consequences, crime victims’ rights under the Connecticut constitution, and the disproportionate impact on certain criminal defendants.

Specifically, CCADV is in favor of provisions 1) prohibiting an agent from executing a bail bond at less than the premium rate (usually 10%), 2) allowing bail bond payment plans with at least a 35% down payment, and 3) increasing the capacity of the Insurance Department and Department of Public Safety to regulate and enforce certification and compliance.